**Shabbos Stories for**

**parshas Vayeilech 5776**

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**Rabbi Zushia and the Sinner**

**By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

One of the most famous and interesting figures in history was Rabbi Zusia of Annipoli; a holy genius who was one of the founders of the Chassidic movement some 250 years ago.

Perhaps even more than for his total Torah knowledge righteousness and ability to do miracles, he was renowned for his humility and love of humanity.

The story has it that once he was sitting in his back yard learning from a Torah book when a wild looking fellow pounded on the gate and, without waiting for a reply burst in waiving a blank piece of paper and a pen. Coarseness and insensitivity were written all over his face as he stood before the Rebbe and growled.

"You are Rabbi Zusia right? The famous Rabbi Zusia that everyone talks about?"

When the Rebbe didn't protest the man continued.

"Here, here, take this paper and write me a letter that I'm free of sin and I can have my dress coat. Here!" And he put the paper and pen on the table before the Rebbe.

Reb Zusia looked at the man blankly trying to discern if he was mad.

"I don't understand. What connection is there between my letter and your coat? Please sit down.

The Rebbe motioned for him to pull up a chair but the fellow paid no attention, He just looked exasperatedly at the sky, then back at the Rebbe and replied with exaggerated hand movements as though he was talking to a child.

"Rabbi, the Chassidim took my dress coat. They said that because I had done a certain sin that I wasn't fit to wear it and they'd only give it back if you write me a letter. And I want it back. I mean, the fact is I could have done a lot of sins… so what? Does that mean they can take my clothes?? So what if I…." And he proceeded to specify what sin it was (the story gave no details.)

"Did you really do such a sin?" The Rebbe asked although the answer was spiritually written on the man's forehead.

"What difference does it make what I did!" he almost yelled. "Just write the letter! Just write! Nu?!!"

"But, my friend please listen." The Rebbe said as calmly as possible. "How can I write a letter saying that you didn't sin when … it could be that you did! That would be a lie."

"Alright! So don't write that I didn't sin. I forgot to tell you that they said you could write that I repented. They said, the Rebbe must either write that I didn't sin or that I repented. Okay? So just write that I did Tshuva (repentance) and I'll go get my coat." He said impatiently.

"But I can't write that either." The Rebbe almost pleaded. "I have never lied in my life. So I couldn't write that unless I know you really did repent and that you regret it so much you won't do it again."

"Arrrggggghhh!!" The visitor shouted in frustration.

"Why are you making so many problems? It's just a coat!! If I went to the priest and begged him he would have mercy and write. Is the holy Rabbi more hard hearted and cruel than the priest?! Maybe I should just go to the priest and be finished!!!"

When Reb Zusia heard these words he stood and, holding his head in his hands yelled out, "OY!!" His eyes filled with tears and he dizzily began to stagger like a drunk. "Oy! I caused a Jew to say such a thing! How? How? OY!!"

He was so disoriented that he stumbled about his yard until he tripped and fell into the garbage ditch that was in the corner. Passers-by that heard the commotion and saw the Rebbe laying there, filthy from head to toe immediately ran in, pulled him out of the muck, took him into his house, helped him clean up and change his clothes and laid him down, moaning and groaning, to rest in his bed for a while.

Meanwhile, when commotion began the visitor unobtrusively backed up behind some bushes and silently watched what was happening.

At first he was sure the Rebbe was just putting on a show to get rid of him and he'd never see his coat again. But after a few seconds he realized it wasn't an act and watched more intently.

"Aha!" He thought to himself. "I get it! This Rabbi is probably such a fanatic that he can't stand the mention of other religions. That's why he's going crazy!!"

But after a few seconds he began to have his doubts about that as well. Could it be that Reb Zusia was serious? That just hearing a Jew say he wanted to leave Judaism would cause him such pain?

He didn't believe it. It HAD to be a show! It just had to be!! No one was that serious about G-d!!

But when they took the Rebbe into his house it suddenly dawned on him that the Rebbe was pained about HIM. Up till now he had completely missed the point of Judaism and of life.

Reb Zusia was in a trauma because for a Jew to even consider leaving Judaism is like leaving life itself! He was pained because he caused a Jew to consider spiritual suicide! Not just life in the afterworld but life right NOW!!

The visitor began holding his head in his hands and with tears streaming down his face, ran to the house, entered Rav Zusia's room and found him sitting on his bed swaying from side to side with red eyes pouring tears, saying "Why?? Why??"

"Rabbi!" He said, "Rabbi… I'm sorry! I'm sorry for what I said! Please forgive me!"

"Ahh, the coat!" Said the Rebbe "Here, bring the paper I'll write that you repented. Please forgive me for what I did."

"No! Rebbe! No!" He exclaimed, also weeping. "Forget the coat, I don't want the coat!! I just want G-d to forgive me for all the stupid mistakes I made. For all the stupid mistakes I made. Please Rebbe! Tell me how!"

The Rebbe just slipped down from the bed, sat on the floor and said "Come, sit next to me and we will both ask the Almighty for forgiveness. I'm sure that together HaShem will have mercy."

And they sat and wept together over their mistakes for almost a half an hour until the visitor became a totally different man.

This answers our questions: How can the Torah is telling us that serving G-d and Judaism is very easy and near?

The reason that most Jews find the Torah and its commandments difficult is because they approach them without soul.

From the 'outside', the commandments seem to be empty rituals that separate us from the world and normalcy.

If we don't feel our Jewish soul.

But when we do…. everything is different.

Like Rebbe Zusia demonstrated in our story; the Jewish soul senses, knows and feels beyond any doubt that G-d is not just an imaginary Biblical figure but rather He creates us every instant anew! That He alone is the source of all being, life, spirit, meaning and beauty; and the Torah and its commandments are manifestations of His constant love.

But this is only after the Jewish soul is activated

As Rebbe Zusia's visitor discovered and as myriads of Jews all over the world will feel this year when they hear the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah the date Adam, the first man, was created exactly 5776 years ago.

G-d is our Father and the King and Creator of the Universe and we are His sons and servants. (See Maimonides, Laws of Repentance 3:4)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Nitzavim email of Yeshiva Ohr Tmimim in Kfar Chabad, Israel.  (Adapted from HaChozrim B'Tshuva, Klapholtz , page 295)*

**The Rabbis Take Washington**

**By Rikki Novetsky**

**When Orthodox rabbis march on Washington, D.C. this week to protest the Iran deal, it won’t be the first time they’ve tried to influence American foreign policy.**



The beginning of the October 1943 march Orthodox Jewish rabbis appealing

for the American government to help save Jews trapped in the Holocaust.

As hundreds of Orthodox rabbis plan to gather in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday (September 9th) [to lobby against the Iran deal](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/aug/28/hundreds-rabbis-march-washington-against-iran-nucl/), a fantastic [online exhibit](http://wymaninstitute.org/special/rabbimarch/pg02.php) recalls another time Orthodox rabbis gathered in the U.S. capital: On October 6, 1943, three days before Yom Kippur, close to 500 Orthodox rabbis demonstrated their support for increased government action to save European Jews during the Holocaust.

The exhibition, titled “The Day The Rabbis Marched,” appears on the website of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies based in Washington, D.C. The text of the exhibit is written by Dr. Rafael Medoff, the director of the institute and Tablet[contributor](http://www.tabletmag.com/author/rafaelmedoff) whose academic focus is America’s response to the Holocaust.

The 1943 march was organized by Hillel Kook, the nephew of the former chief rabbi of British Mandate Palestine, Abraham Isaac Kook; Hillel Kook took on the name [Peter Bergson](http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/89057/three-lies) for his political activities in America.Bergson’s activism was assertive and unabashedly public, despite not being American himself. In addition to organizing the march, he advertised in newspapers and even commissioned a theatrical performance to alert Americans about Nazi Germany. He was the eventual founder of the Bergson Group, which launched the strongest American effort to save the Jews of Europe.

Prominent American Jews at the time were far less interested in public protest and as a result, writes Medoff, “it was the only rally in Washington on the rescue issue during the entire period of the Holocaust.” Even in its inception, several influential Jews worried that the march would be a source of embarrassment, such as [Sol Bloom](http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/sol-bloom-playground/history), a New York Congressman who chaired the House Foreign Affairs Committee and tried to convince the rabbis not to march.

Bloom, a passionate supporter of the creation of a Jewish State who helped write the U.N. [charter](http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/) in 1945, strongly disliked Bergson and publicly discredited his activism by pointing out his alien status in America, and his political idiocy by demonstrating the prohibitive costs of any rescue plan he suggested. And Bloom knew a thing or two about making it as a Jew in America: he was a self-made businessman, raised in poverty and eventually became one of the most famous real estate developers in New York City. According to the Wyman exhibit, Bloom told the rabbis that it would be undignified for them to appear as a group in Washington, looking un-American in their beards and long coats.

Rabbi Stephen Wise, a prominent Reform rabbi at the time, was also against the protesters. Wise, like Bloom, certainly did not shirk from his own Jewish identity. He was a prominent American Zionist leader and a close collaborator with Theodor Herzl himself. Wise also harbored a deep hatred for Bergson. According to the Wyman Institute, Wise called the march an “Orthodox rabbinic parade” run by “stuntists,” and was a “painful and even lamentable exhibition” which threatened the well-being of American Jews.

Despite the disapproval from prominent American Jews, the 500 rabbis made it to Washington. They came from all over the country, mainly from the New York and other cities in the Northeast, but some as far as the Midwest traveling from the likes of Chicago and Cleveland.

Although many moderate Orthodox Jewish rabbis made it to the march, the main organization in charge of recruiting the rabbis was Va’ad HaHatzala, whose leaders were Yiddish-speaking Torah scholars who completely avoided involvement in American politics. The Holocaust proved as a rare exception to their isolationist outlook. Writes Medoff:

“The rabbis who marched that day included some of the most prominent rabbinical figures in the American Jewish community, such as Eliezer Silver and Israel Rosenberg, co-presidents of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis; Solomon Friedman, president of the Union of Grand Rabbis; Bernard Dov Leventhal, known both as the chief rabbi of Philadelphia and one of the leaders of the Orthodox rabbinate nationwide; and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, who would later come to be regarded as the leading authority in America on matters of Jewish religious law. The marchers also included an interesting array of hasidic rabbis side by side with rabbis known as mitnagdim, the traditional theological critics of hasidism.”

When the rabbis arrived in Washington, they walked from Union Station to the steps of the Capitol building. They were met by various prominent senators and Vice President Henry Wallace, who made a statement that expressed grief over the plight of European Jews, but expressed no interest in changing any policies. Two rabbis read the group’s petition in Hebrew and English, asking President Roosevelt to form a special agency to rescue the remainder of Jews in Europe.

The rabbis chartered cars to the Lincoln Memorial where they prayed for the welfare of the president, America’s soldiers abroad, and European Jews. They finished by singing the national anthem in Hebrew.

After walking to the White House, they discovered their meeting with President Roosevelt had been canceled. Samuel Rosenman, another close Jewish advisor to the president, urged FDR not to meet with the rabbis. Before their arrival, the president exited through the back door of the White House.

Instead, they were [met with presidential secretary Marvin McIntryre](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/filmmore/reference/primary/preswashington.html) who told them the president was unavailable.

*Reprinted from the September 8, 2015 email of Tablet Magazine.*

**For Hasidic Jew who Consults for Google, No College Degree Required**

**By** [**Ben Sales**](http://www.jta.org/author/ben-sales/)



**Issamar Ginzberg speaking at the Temech Conference for Women in Business in Jerusalem, June 15, 2015. (Sharon Altshul)**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — When Issamar Ginzberg enters his Jerusalem office on a sweltering summer day, he’s wearing a long black coat tied at the waist and a black hat. His long, scraggly beard and sidecurls, or payos, offer no relief from the heat.

The office — thank G-d — is air conditioned, and Ginzberg offers kosher candy from a bowl on his desk. Nearby sit his laptop and LG phone, complete with a “kosher” filter that restricts it from many websites. While some haredi Orthodox men do without any smartphone, Ginzberg has two. He also keeps a Blackberry handy for U.S. business trips.

On a nearby shelf sits a series of Yiddish audio CDs on how to succeed in business that Ginzberg produces and sells. The room, which has an interior that wouldn’t look out of place in a Tel Aviv office building, is on the parking level of his apartment building in a haredi neighborhood about where the building superintendent might sit.



**Issamar Ginzberg promotes himself as “a character who**

**just stepped out of ‘Fiddler on the Roof.'” (Courtesy of Issamar Ginzberg)**

A scion of a Hasidic rabbinic dynasty, Ginzberg lives in Jerusalem’s haredi world, attending synagogue daily and spending hours every morning learning Torah. But by afternoon, evening and night, he is a marketing consultant to more than 100 clients, among them Google and Oracle.

“My key clientele is the corporate world and entrepreneurs in the non-Jewish, non-Orthodox world,” said Ginzberg, 35, a father of four. “One of the reasons I’m trusted so much by the Orthodox community is because they know I’m legit, because I actually work in the real world.”

The Brooklyn native moved to Jerusalem seven years ago, just as the movement in Israel to integrate haredim into the army and labor force was gaining attention. Labor force participation rates for haredi men have risen in recent years and now stand at 45 percent; many haredi men still opt to study Torah full time rather than work.

Many haredim see a contradiction between secular workplace culture and their own, but Ginzberg says his black hat and beard are a feature, not a bug. He emphasizes his religious background on his [promotional materials](http://www.issamar.com/), calling himself “Rabbi Issamar” and “a character who just stepped out of ‘Fiddler on the Roof.”’

“It’s harder to be taken seriously, but the novelty that you look different gives you 10 seconds of, ‘Let me see what this guy has to offer,’” he said. “If you meet 20 WASPs and one guy who looks like me, which one will you remember six months later?”

Ginzberg grew up speaking Yiddish and English in an Orthodox neighborhood of New York, and had an early appetite for business. As a teenager, he used classified ads and the early Internet to buy 386-model computers in bulk and resell them for profit. He became a mortgage broker 15 years ago and parlayed that into a consulting business. He now has 120 regular clients that pay $3,000 for 10-hour packages.

To accommodate his haredi lifestyle, Ginzberg begins his days at 7 a.m., responding to late emails from U.S. clients before attending morning prayers at 8 or 9 a.m. He then studies Torah with a partner until 1 p.m., when he moves back to consulting, generally switching between clients in one-hour shifts. Aside from spending two-and-a-half hours with his family in the evening, Ginzberg works well past midnight with West Coast businesses, getting five hours of sleep at most.

“He and I as well think it’s better to learn [Torah], but you can’t learn all day because there’s no salary,” said Moti Feldstein, director of Kemach, an organization that has helped 7,400 haredi men find work. “You have kids. You need to make a living. He says, ‘Look at me: I go around with my suit, with my hat, I learn Torah and I work.”

Clients say what makes Ginzberg valuable is his ability to quickly understand a diverse set of topics despite having no professional training in them. Ginzberg says that comes from being an autodidact with a work ethic formed by learning at yeshiva. He doesn’t have a college degree, but has taught himself, he says, by voraciously reading books and papers on business and psychology.

“I like that he can get to the point,” said Yael Sela-Shapiro, a Hebrew-English translator who consulted with Ginzberg and helped set up a seminar he gave to Google’s Israel office in 2013. “He talks for a few minutes and manages to pinpoint the exact question that can get the information he needs to give you the best advice.”

Since moving to Israel, Ginzberg has become involved in increasing the employment rates of haredi men. He interfaces between Kemach and potential employers like Google and Intel, helping bridge cultural gaps between the high-tech and haredi worlds. And he lectures at yeshivas in Israel and America, introducing students to the fundamentals of business.

“He explains what it is to work, professionalism,” Feldstein said. “You work with a staff, you have a manager, you have to come on time, how to work when there’s someone different next to you.”

Judging from [Ginzberg’s Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rabbi-Issamar-Ginzberg/356613273496?fref=ts" \t "_blank), he doesn’t just use the Internet to make a living — he also enjoys it. In addition to business advice, he posts links to articles on the Middle East, Shabbat and, in one case, being mistaken for an Amish man. Ginzberg maintains it’s all part of the effort to promote his work.

“You can’t run away from social media,” he said. “Business is three-dimensional. People are three-dimensional. When I say have a good Shabbos, I’m basically proud of the fact I’m a religious Jew. I’m reminding people, whether they’re religious or not, Shabbos is coming. I’m showing everyone that I’m lucky to be who I am and do what I do.”

*Reprinted from the September 10, 2015 email of the AJOP (Association of Jewish Outreach Professionals) UPDATE. The article was originally published by the JTA (Jewish Telegraph Agency) on September 1. 2015.*

**An Unusual Shabbos**

**With the Chofetz Chaim**

Once, a young man was traveling home from out of town, trying to arrive in time for Shabbos. He passed through Radin on Erev Shabbos and realized that he would not make it home in time for Shabbos. He decided to stay in Radin for Shabbos, and merited to stay at the house of a relative of his, the Chofetz Chaim.

The young man was exhausted from his travels and decided to take a quick nap before Shabbos started. When he woke up, he saw that it was already very dark outside.

The Chofetz Chaim noticed that he was up and greeted him with a warm ‘Gut Shabbos!’ He told him to daven Kabbalas Shabbos and Ma’ariv, and then they would have the seudah.

After he finished davening, the Chofetz Chaim said Kiddush and they washed and had the meal. The young man wondered where the rest of the family was, but thought it was impolite to ask. After Bentching, the Chofetz Chaim wished him a Gut Shabbos again, and left to go to sleep.

The young man was not tired, so he walked around the house a little. He was shocked when he saw the clock in the kitchen read 4:00 in the morning! He thought to himself that the clock must be wrong, it can’t be that late! He went to his room and went to sleep.

In the morning, he asked the Rebbitzen if the clock in the kitchen was accurate, and she said it was.

He asked her what happened when Shabbos started and she told him, “You were sleeping so soundly when Shabbos started that the Chofetz Chaim didn’t want to wake you. He also refused to start the seudah without you, so I made Kiddush for the rest of us. We ate and then we went to sleep. The Chofetz Chaim stayed up and learned while he waited for you to get up and have the Shabbos seudah together!” (Me’oros HaShabbos, p. 115)

*Reprinted from the Parshas Nitzavim 5775 email of “Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights” compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**The Baal Shem Tov Learns an Important Lesson from Eliyahu HaNavi**

The Baal Shem Tov once wrote the following about himself:

“On my sixteenth birthday, the 18th of Elul 5474, I was in a small village at an inn, where the innkeeper was a very simple Jew. He could only daven the few Prayers he knew with difficulty, and he didn’t have any idea as to what the words meant. However, he had a great awe of Heaven and for everything that would occur to him he would comment, “Blessed be Hashem, and may He be blessed forever and ever!”

The innkeeper's wife and partner in running the inn had a different saying, “Blessed be Hashem’s Holy Name!”

I went out to the field to meditate in solitude, as had been taught by the Sages before us, that on your birthday one should contemplate their thoughts alone for a period of time. I said some Tehilim and concentrated on the Divine Names of Hashem, and as I was immersed in this, I had lost awareness of my surroundings.

Suddenly, I saw Eliyahu HaNavi, and a smile was on his lips. I was very amazed that I should merit to see Eliyahu HaNavi while alone! When I was with the Tzaddik Rabbi Meir, and also with others of the hidden Tzaddikim I had the fortune to see Eliyahu HaNavi. But to be privileged to this while alone, this was the very first time and I was truly amazed. I was unable to interpret the smile on Eliyahu HaNavi’s face, and this is what he said to me:

‘You are struggling with great effort to focus your mind on the Divine Names of Hashem that come from the pesukim of Tehilim which Dovid Ha’melech composed. However, Aaron Shlomo the innkeeper and Zlota his wife are ignorant of the Divine Names that come from their sayings, “Blessed be Hashem, and may He be blessed forever and ever!” and “Blessed be Hashem’s Holy Name!” Yet, these Divine Names make a storm throughout all the worlds far beyond the intention of the Divine Names that the great Tzaddikim can create!’

Eliyahu HaNavi then told me about the pleasure Hashem takes, so to speak, from the praise and thanks of the men, women, and children that praise Him, especially when the praise and thanks comes from simple people, and most specifically when it is ongoing and continual praise, because then they are continuously connected with Hashem with pure faith and a sincere heart.

From that time on I took upon myself a path in the service of Hashem to bring men, women and children to say words of praise to Hashem. Then, when I would always ask them about their health, the health of their children, and about their parnasah, they would answer me with different words of praise for Hashem, each one in their own way, for this is what Hashem takes true delight in!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Nitzavim 5775 email of “Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights” compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*

**A Tale to Remember**

**Ivan or Hashem: Whom Should One Fear?**

During World War I, many borders between neighboring countries were closed. Soldiers would patrol these borders in order to stop anyone who tried to cross. At one of the borders, there was a cruel and heartless guard, named Ivan. If he ever caught anyone trying to cross the border, he would kill him without mercy. He was so cruel that people shuddered at the mere mention of his name.

A Jew from the Town of Novardok once had to cross the border in order to deliver an important message. He knew that his mission was extremely dangerous but the message was so urgent that he had no choice. Late at night, he stealthily crept towards the border, trying to hide in the darkness. As he was almost at the border, he suddenly heard a shout, “Halt! Who goes there?!” Ivan had seen him.

There was no way to flee as he would surely be caught. He turned around to see a fierce looking guard pointing his rifle toward him.

“Where is your pass!” thundered Ivan. “No one has ever escaped my clutches. Do you know who I am?!”

The Jew thought for a moment, and then shook his head no.

The cruel guard said, “I am Ivan!” expecting his prisoner to tremble and become white with fear.

To Ivan’s surprise, the young Jew calmly answered him, “If Hashem wants, I will return home alive.”

Ivan became furious. “What do you mean? I am going to shoot you! You have just a few more seconds to live!”

The Jew spoke again, “If Hashem wants me to live, then you are powerless.” Ivan got so angry that he was ready to explode. His face turned red as he aimed his gun to shoot. He said, “All I need to do is pull the trigger!”

The Jew replied, “What you want does not matter. All that counts is what Hashem wants.”

Ivan snapped, “We will see about that,” as he pointed the gun to the prisoner’s forehead and was about to pull the trigger.

The young man stood there as calmly as before and said, “I am not afraid of you. If Hashem wants, I will leave here alive.”

When he heard that, Ivan lost all control. “You are crazy!” he screamed. “You are mad! Get out of here now before I shoot! Run quickly or I will pull the trigger!!”

The Jew ran away and was saved.

He later related that he was saved only because he completely relied on Hashem.

“Every day we say ‘Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad’, where we declare that Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One. If we say these words with feeling every day and live by them, Hashem will always protect us and save us from harm!”

*Reprinted from the Parshas Nitzavim 5775 email of “Torah U’Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights” compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.*